



Office of the Mayor
City of Seattle
Bruce Harrell, Mayor

Executive Order 2025-10: Exploring actions City government can take to incentivize and support sufficient distribution of grocery stores, including through exercising eminent domain powers, convening a stakeholder workgroup, and committing to advocacy for needed changes to state law.

WHEREAS, Grocery stores provide essential goods necessary for the public health of the people of Seattle; and

WHEREAS, food insecurity has negative consequences to people's well-being and impacts children's health, behavior, and readiness to learn in school; and

WHEREAS, Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, and transgender households are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, a food desert is an area where residents have limited access to healthy and affordable food options or medicine and there is a higher proportion of low-income residents; and

WHEREAS, convenient access to groceries and medicine, whether from home, school, or work, can help ensure equitable access to healthy and local foods, particularly for people with mobility issues; and

WHEREAS, food deserts exist throughout the City, with concentrations in Beacon Hill, Delridge, Georgetown, Haller Lake, High Point, Lake City, Northgate, Rainier Beach, Rainier Valley, and South Park; and

WHEREAS, other neighborhoods in the City have only one full-service grocery store that, if closed, would result in a food desert for that area; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, the City adopted Resolution 31019, establishing the City's goal of ensuring access to healthy and local foods; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, the City adopted Resolution 31441, adopting the City's first Food Action Plan; and

WHEREAS, in 2024, the City adopted Resolution 32144, approving a major update to the City's Food Action Plan and directing the Office of Sustainability and Environment to support interdepartmental coordination and monitoring to ensure successful implementation; and

WHEREAS, the Food Action Plan directs the City to “develop and implement community and economic development initiatives that expand access to fresh, local, affordable, culturally relevant food and create economic opportunities in underserved communities;” and

WHEREAS, the City’s Comprehensive Plan includes goals and policies supporting convenient access to grocery stores and pharmacies as a matter of public policy for the City, including Policy GS 1.14 directing the City to “support convenient access to healthful and culturally relevant food for all areas where people live by encouraging grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and community food gardens;” and

WHEREAS, earlier this year, as part of the response to Statement of Legislative Intent OPCD-003S-A, the Executive made multiple recommendations on how to attract food retailers to existing food deserts; and

WHEREAS, the closure of the Fred Meyer in the Lake City neighborhood in October will result in about 3,500 households losing convenient access to a full-service grocery store or pharmacy; and

WHEREAS, grocery stores and pharmacies operate with thin profit margins and face numerous impediments to remaining open, including but not limited to the rising cost of goods and labor, tariffs, retail theft, and increasing competition with online shopping; and

WHEREAS, mergers and acquisitions within the grocery store and pharmacy industry represent a major threat to food security and access to affordable medicine; and

WHEREAS, while the City has limited tools to ensure grocery stores and pharmacies remain open, it can work with community partners and businesses to identify how it might better support these valued and essential services; and

WHEREAS, the Executive has transmitted emergency interim legislation to the City Council that prohibits restrictive covenants and other negative use restrictions to limit or prohibit a property’s future use as a grocery store or pharmacy; and

WHEREAS, the City operates or funds many programs that ensure food access for low-income residents, including but not limited to the P-Patch Program, Fresh Bucks, food banks, meal programs for youth and seniors, and the Food Equity Fund; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor’s 2026 Proposed Budget increases the City’s food investments by 20% to over \$50 million; providing more funding for food banks, eliminating the waiting list and increasing the benefit of direct cash subsidies for low-income families to purchase healthy food (Fresh Bucks); expanding farmers markets; and supporting grocery stores and small businesses to provide more healthy, fresh food options in food deserts; and

WHEREAS, additional action is necessary to help ensure people throughout Seattle have access to fresh, local, affordable, culturally relevant food and medicine;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor of Seattle, hereby order the following actions to occur:

- A. I direct the City to explore the acquisition of, by negotiation or eminent domain, the property situated at 13000 Lake City Way NE, which presently houses a Fred Meyer store. This effort should include:
 - Identifying the procedural requirements for using eminent domain;
 - Developing a plan for potential future uses of the property, including, but not limited to, a grocery store operated by a third party, a year-round farmer's market, other food and pharmacy access, restaurants, childcare, and housing; and
 - As appropriate, engaging in direct negotiations with current and potential future property owners or partners.
- B. I direct my office to convene a stakeholder group specifically focused on the challenges faced by the Lake City community. This should include developing recommendations to address food and pharmacy access, affordability, livability, and public safety concerns.
- C. I direct City departments, including the Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS), the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), the Office of Economic Development (OED), and the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE), to identify locations that are currently or may be at risk of becoming food deserts due to grocery store closures.

City departments will work with the Innovation and Performance (IP) Team to develop a system to measure the magnitude of the need in each location. This information will be made publicly available on a City dashboard.

- D. For each location identified as a current or potential future food desert, I direct the above-referenced City departments to identify whether the City can play a role in stabilizing an existing grocery store or helping to acquire properties in strategic locations that may support a grocery store or pharmacy and working with potential private sector partners to assess feasibility. In cases where site acquisition makes sense, the report should identify options for acquisition, including through the City exercising its eminent domain powers.
- E. I direct the above-referenced City departments to coordinate to develop legislation to change land use, zoning, and permitting regulations to help incentivize more grocery stores and pharmacies in needed locations, including:

- Height and density bonuses specifically related to grocery stores and pharmacies.
- Strategically zoning land for commercial development to expand locations where grocery stores and pharmacies can be sited.
- Modifying the maximum size of use limits in commercial zones to allow for larger-format, full-service grocery stores in more areas of the City.
- Designating grocery stores and pharmacies as a public benefit under the City's Incentive Zoning program.

F. I direct the Office of Intergovernmental Relations (OIR) to include in the City's 2026 State Legislative Agenda the following priorities:

- Banning restrictive covenants and other restrictions that limit or prohibit a property from including a grocery store; and
- Modifying the state business and occupation tax structure to provide relief to grocery stores; and
- Other incentives for grocery stores to locate in key geographic areas.

This Executive Order will be in effect until rescinded by the mayor.

Any questions regarding this Executive Order should be directed to Andrew Myerberg, Chief of Staff, and Marco Lowe, Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Mayor.

Dated this 20th day of October, 2025.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Bruce A. Harrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bruce" being the most prominent.

Bruce A. Harrell
Mayor of Seattle